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THE
LOBSTER

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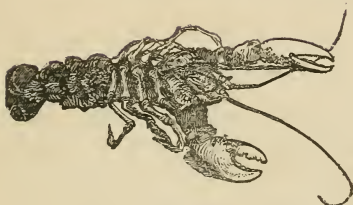
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March 14th 1847

Wm. Mitchell,

Washington

Penn^a

THE LOBSTER.



A Lobster.

REVISED BY THE EDITOR.

D. P. KIDDER.

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1845.

THE LOBSTER.

CHAPTER I.

CURIOUS STRUCTURE OF THE LOBSTER—ITS EXACT
ADAPTATION TO ITS CIRCUMSTANCES—MICROSCO-
PIC CREATURES FORMED ON THE SAME PLAN.

THE lobster has often attracted attention from its peculiar appearance, yet rarely has it awakened the admiration which it ought to call forth. Look at the first with which you meet, and observe what you can of its structure. It will be seen at once that the limbs, as well as the whole body, are encased in tubes of a solid material, all far more carefully adapted to their respective places than the most skillfully-contrived armor that was ever made. The various parts, too, are admirably united together; the joints being almost always those of a nicely-constructed hinge. And then the muscles by which they are moved are lodged within, and are no less

wisely suited to their purpose, so that a lobster shows as clearly that God made it, as any creature that can be taken from the surface of the earth, or from the midst of the waters.

The head and thorax of the lobster, like those of some other creatures, are blended into one portion, covered above by the carapace, or shield, and below by a narrow piece, to the sides of which the legs are attached. To the part thus constructed succeeds the portion often called the tail, defended above by seven broad, arched plates of armor, hinged on, and regularly overlapping each other in succession. The last of these has two oar-like portions, on each side of which the outermost is transversely jointed.

The limbs are divided into three sets. On each side of the mouth five of them appear, furnished with tentacles, or arms, and are called foot-jaws. These limbs seize the food, turn it about, and apply it to the mouth.

Next succeed five pair of true limbs. Of these the first pair have great power, and the last joint consists of large pincers, able to inflict severe injury. The two pairs of pincers

differ in form and use. The left-hand ones have their opposing edges finely toothed, and are employed in seizing and cutting the prey. The right-hand pair have blunt edges, and seem designed for holding, anchor-like, any fixed objects, thus mooring the animal amid the dashing of the tempest-tossed waters. Of the four succeeding limbs on each side, the first two end in small pincers, the rest are simply pointed.

Along the under surface of the tail are certain limbs, called false feet. Of these there are five pairs, and all, except the first, are divided at the last joint. These false feet assist, perhaps, in swimming; and the female uses them to affix the eggs, or spawn, by means of a glutinous fluid, to the under surface of her body.

The shield, already mentioned, projects to defend the eyes: these are two in number, and are placed on a short movable foot-stalk. Below the eyes are four antennæ, or horns, of which the central pair are the shortest and most slender, and they also are divided.

In the lobster the organs of hearing are placed underneath, on the basal, or lowest

joint of the larger pair of antennæ. They appear in the form of a small membrane, surrounded by a slightly-raised margin. This membrane covers a little cell filled with fluid, and a small branch of the nerve supplying the antennæ ramifies within it. It is by the vibration of the surrounding water that the sensation of hearing is conveyed, but it cannot be very definite or acute.

The mouth of the lobster is provided with two greater jaws, two smaller ones, and two feelers. It is thus enabled to crush very hard substances.

The lobster is formed for swimming. The hinder part of its body is divided into segments, which play on each other by a remarkable kind of mechanism, the margins of each portion overlapping, and partly inclosing, the succeeding one. By striking the water with a vigorous flap of the tail the lobster propels itself; and the paddles which terminate this part are so arranged, that when the animal raises or extends the tail, they slide over each other, so as to present the least possible surface to the water. During the stroke, which is inward, they expand to

the full. So great is the power of this stroke, that a lobster will instantly dart itself backward to a distance of eighteen or twenty feet.

In this creature, and others of similar rank, may be detected an organ, with very muscular coats, able to propel its contents into the vessels, and, therefore, properly called a heart. The distinction, which can scarcely be made in inferior creatures, between arteries and veins, is here apparent. The vessels into which the blood is sent, to distribute it, are certainly arteries, while the vessels which bring it back to the heart are as certainly veins. The heart of the lobster is just under the large portion of shell forming one piece, covering the upper part of the body, and called the shield; its pulsations are very distinct, and performed with great regularity.

The stomach of these creatures is supported by strong pieces, which are furnished with three hard teeth, moved by powerful muscles, able to grind the food to a pulp, so that it is reduced a second time before digestion commences.

Equally well adapted to their circum-

stances is the apparatus for breathing. If the sides of the shield already mentioned are broken away, where the margin comes down to the base of the legs, a shallow chamber will be laid open on each side, lined with a fine membrane, and inclosing a series of tufts. These tufts are the gills of the lobster, each one consisting of a stem, beset with fibres, which produce a feathery appearance. Each stem incloses an artery and a vein. The gill-chambers freely admit the water by a wide opening, while another near the mouth, closed by a plate, permits its egress. The movements of other parts keep the water in constant motion, and promote its circulation through the chambers, so that fresh fluid is brought to the surfaces of the gills. Hence, the more the limbs are worked, the more freely is water received, and the more rapidly does the air act on the blood.

It is well to attend to the lobster for its own sake; but it is also well because it affords a fair sample of the plan on which many creatures are modeled. Naturalists have associated it indeed with a great multi-

tude of animals. Some of these are microscopic. Immense numbers of these are found in stagnant waters ; yet many exist in rivers and streams, and may be found abundantly in that with which the houses of London are supplied. Microscopic plants and animalcules, and the dead of their own race, serve them as food, while they, in turn, are the prey of the hydra and other aquatic creatures.

The appearance of some of these singular little creatures, inclosed in a shelly covering, is calculated to excite and reward curiosity. Many, indeed, are so much like minute shells, that a person ignorant of their kind of inhabitants would never suspect their true place in the animal kingdom. The legs of some are furnished with branchial fringes, which appear in perpetual motion. Their limbs, with few exceptions, are all organs for movement in the waters. Their number varies : some have six, others twenty, others forty-two, and some even more than a hundred.

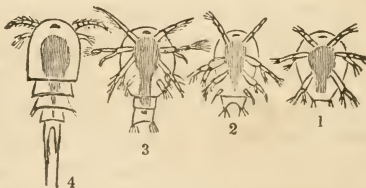
The figures of a few species will now be given, to show the general characters of

form which these creatures display, as well as the changes exhibited by the young in the progress of their growth. The following *Cyclops quadricornis* is common in fresh water. The adult is about nine-twelfths of a line long—a line being the twelfth part of an inch.



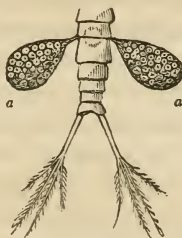
Cyclops quadricornis. *a*, body of four segments ; *b*, tail of six ; *c*, *c*, antennæ ; *d*, *d*, smaller antennæ, four jointed ; *e*, *e*, limbs, of which the first pair are the most powerful.

The following represent the young at different periods of their lives.



1. Young just after birth ; 2. Young eight days old ; 3. Young fifteen days old ; 4. Young after the first molt.

The provision made for the increase of these creatures will be apparent from the adjoining figure. *a, a*, egg-sacs of the female.



Egg-sacs.

The shell which covers these minute animals is often delicately transparent, permitting not only the inclosed animal, but even its internal structure, to be perceived. In



Daphnia Pulex.

general there is only a single eye. The multitudes of some species in stagnant water is often so great as to tinge it with their own color. Thus the *Daphnia pulex* has so abounded in some instances, as to give to the water of a pond the color of blood.

The increase of some animals of this kind is very remarkable. The female of *Cyclops quadricornis*, common in the ordinary water of London, will lay eight times every three months, and upward of forty eggs each time ; and as the young, if so they may be called, are able to lay at the age of about three months, the number of which one female may be the parent, in the course of a year, is enormous.

These animals resist cold in a very extraordinary manner. They have been purposely frozen in water congealed to ice, and on its being melted most of them appeared as active and vigorous as before. They also endured to be dried, though not for many minutes. On one occasion it was found that out of twelve individuals, dried for fifteen minutes, five only recovered on being restored to the water, and that twelve, kept dry

for twenty-five minutes, perished. Yet, as in seasons of drought the pools and ditches which they inhabit are so commonly dried up, it is certain they will retain life when buried in mud, so long as any moisture remains. They become active when the rain falls, but are destroyed when the mud hardens. Still, it is said, the eggs do not perish with the parent, but will be hatched four or five days after being placed in water.

Another creature, the *Cypris pubera*, is found in pure stagnant water, and is very active in its movements. Its singular tail is freely movable, the creature coming forth from the shell at pleasure.



Cypris Pubera, shell removed. Cypris Pubera, in its shell.

The animals of another group adhere to the bodies of various tenants of the waters, on whose juices they feed. Hence the mouth is adapted not to mastication, but suction.

The eyes are two in number. The body is covered with a shell, sometimes consisting of a single shield, in others divided into sections. Two of the antennæ, or horn-like parts, are formed into pincers, and as such are used in taking a firm hold.



CHAPTER II.

THE CRAB—VARIOUS REMARKABLE CREATURES OF
THIS KIND—ADMIRABLE PROVISION OF DIVINE
WISDOM.

IN continuing our observations of those creatures to which the lobster is allied, the common crab now demands our particular attention. Its skeleton is external. Each side of the animal is provided with four legs and a hand, the latter pincer-like, being divided at the end into two parts. One of these hands is movable, the other not. The crab has no tongue, but it has organs of taste. The mouth is provided with eight pairs of jaws. A part of the stomach is furnished with grinding teeth, and here mastication is completed. The antennæ are organs of touch.

The crab is enabled to move in any direction, with equal facility. The solid sheath, which includes the whole of the viscera and other soft parts of these animals, is fully adapted to this purpose. Joints, therefore, are provided, either between the different rings of the body or the various elements of

the limbs, allowing of motion to a greater or less extent between these different pieces. That this may be done, the movable piece rests on that which precedes it by two hinge-like joints, and the whole shows a most simple but effective arrangement.

Many crabs, from their general structure, and the shortness of their tails, are far better adapted for walking on the shore, or at the bottom of the sea, than for swimming. Most persons, who have visited the sea-shore at low tide, have observed shoals of crabs running quickly about, in their side-way manner, and endeavoring, when approached, to bury themselves in the sand. It is, indeed, far more common for the crab thus to approach the shore than the lobster, for the former is more terrestrial than the latter. Yet both, provided the gills are kept bathed with their proper fluid, will live, for a long time, out of their native element. Many crabs lead almost their whole lives out of water.

Certain fresh-water species are thus semi-terrestrial. One, common in Italy, Greece, and Egypt, and well known to the ancients, is capable of living, for a considerable period,

on dry land. The Greek priests eat it raw, and it forms one of the dishes of the Italians during Lent. It is figured on many of the ancient Sicilian and Grecian medals.

The species of a genus which has one of the pincer-claws longer than the other, it being sometimes the right, and at others the left, dig with the larger claw burrows on the borders of the shore ; and in these they take up their abode. These burrows, which they close when tenanting them, are circular, and carried down obliquely to a great depth. Frequently are they so numerous as to remind the spectator of a rabbit warren. Each one has only a single occupant. One species in South Carolina passes three months of the winter in this retreat, and only visits the sea when about to spawn.

The land-crabs of another genus, of which one species lives in Northern Africa, and another in India, also tenant burrows, which they dig in the sand, near the sea. They only quit them at sunset to return home in the morning. With such velocity do they run on land that, it is said, a man on horse-back can scarcely keep up with them.

Of these creatures, however, the most celebrated is the violet crab, a native of the West Indies and South America. In May and June, when the rainy season takes place, these creatures descend the mountains, which are their usual abode, and that in such numbers that the roads and woods are covered with them. So skillfully do they steer their course, that they travel by the easiest descent, and arrive most readily at the sea, the



Violet Crabs on their inland route.

object at which they aim. They are said to resemble a vast army marching in battle array, following always a straight line, and not breaking their ranks. They surmount every obstacle that is in their way, and even scale the houses that lie in their path. They sometimes enter the houses, making a noise like that of rats ; and when they invade gardens they destroy with their claws the whole produce.

In Jamaica it is said to be impossible to keep them out of the houses, or even out of the bedrooms, where, at one time scratching with their large claws, and at another rattling across the floor, they make a noise that would not a little astonish and alarm a stranger.

Escaping various dangers during a march which sometimes occupiés three months, they arrive at last at the sea-shore, and prepare to cast their spawn. As yet the eggs are within the bodies of the crabs ; and as soon as they have reached the spot they have sought, they go eagerly to the edge of the water,* and let the waves wash over them two or three times. They now seek a lodging on land. Here the spawn rapidly increases ;

it is excluded from the body, and adheres to it under the flaps of the tail. The crabs in this state once more seek the shore, shake off the spawn into the water, and, leaving it to be hatched, retreat to the mountains. Many, from exhaustion, fail in their attempt. Much of the spawn is said to be devoured by fish; but at length multitudes of little crabs may be seen leaving the shore, and slowly traveling up the neighboring heights.

One writer says:—"On descending Quahill, from the vale of Plaintain-Garden River, the road appeared of a reddish color, as if strewed with brick-dust. I dismounted from my horse to examine the cause of so unusual an appearance, and was not a little astonished to find that it was owing to the myriads of young black crabs, about the size of a man's finger, crossing the road, and moving, at a brisk pace, direct for the mountains. I was concerned to think of the destruction I was causing in traveling through such a body of useful creatures, as I fancied that every time my horse put down a foot it was the loss of at least ten lives. I rode along the coast a distance of about fifteen miles, and found it

nearly the same the whole way, only that in some places they were more numerous, in others less so. Returning the following day, I found the road still covered with them, the same as the day before. It is worthy of remark, that this prodigious multitude of young ones were moving from a rock-bound shore, formed by inaccessible cliffs, the abode of sea-birds, and against which the waves of the sea were constantly dashed by the trade-wind blowing directly upon them. That the old crabs should be able to deposit their eggs in such a part of the coast (if that, as would appear, is the habit of the animal) is not a little extraordinary."

The long journeys of the parent crabs require, of course, a special provision in the structure of these creatures. It is necessary that the gills should be kept constantly moist; but that God who gave a stomach to the camel so curiously formed that it can carry a large quantity of water during its journeys in the desert, was at no loss to provide for the violet crab. Recent observation has shown, what would have been observed before had due attention been given to this

creature, that there is a kind of reservoir capable of containing a certain quantity of water, placed immediately above the gills, where the front part of the shield appears more swollen than in the species of crabs which are truly aquatic. How delightful is it to observe this, among innumerable provisions of the all-wise God, for the welfare of inferior creatures !

The hermit crab is a remarkable creature. Instead of the whole hinder part of the body being protected by a hard and shelly armor, it is covered with a sort of leathery membrane. Thus comparatively defenseless, it is obliged to resort to artificial means of protection. Apart from this effort of a marvelous instinct, how could it escape being bruised and broken among the rough stones of a rocky beach, when a rolling tide lashed the shore ? How, too, could it escape the assaults of its enemies ?

The means employed in this instance are very curious. The hermit crab selects an empty turban-like shell, and inserting its tail, retreats backward, that in the winding recesses of its chosen dwelling it may find



Hermit Crab.—*Pagurus miles*.

The upper figure shows the unprotected tail; the lower one, the "hermit," with his tail coiled up in a turbinated shell.

safety. When grown too large for the house it has, it searches for another, and takes up its abode in one more spacious.

If we take the common hermit crab of our coasts, we shall find that only the right of its pincer-claws is largely developed, and with this it both shuts and guards the opening of

its shell. The locomotive legs are feeble, and of these only two in each side are fairly developed. The paddle at the end of the tail in other creatures, now no longer needed as such, is changed into a sort of anchor, by which the animal retains a firm hold of the bottom of its dwelling. Carrying this with it, it prowls about in quest of prey. Where a dead carcass affords a repast, numbers of these creatures may sometimes be seen gathered together.

Another very remarkable creature forms a part of the genus called *Brigus*, and among these the tail, though small, is solid. None



Brigus Latro, on a Cocoa-nut Palm Branch.

of these animals tenant shells. One remarkable species, of large size, climbs trees, and feeds on the fruit of a species of palm. Its food is a small kind of cocoa-nut; it lives not in holes in the rocks, but at the roots of trees. It is a favorite food of the natives of some of the South Sea islands.

Mr. T. D. Bennett observed a curious crab, that frequents the shallowest waters of the shore-reef, at Raiatea. The most interesting feature in its economy is an attempt it makes at disguise, by covering itself with decayed vegetable substances, mud, and coral-sand, the better to ensnare its prey. The example he obtained measured six inches in the circumference of the shell, and was of a dull brown color; the entire surface of the body and legs is covered with rigid and incurved bristles, calculated to retain the extraneous substances used for disguise, while short and well-concealed forcep-claws, and foot-stalks curving upward, to raise the eyes above the pile of materials on the back, are also in exact accordance with the secretive habits of this animal. Although active when captured, its movements in the water were

sluggish, and the attention of Mr. Bennett was drawn to the creature only by the strange phenomenon of what appeared to be a lump of rubbish moving slowly from one spot to another. The disguise employed by this crab is not, however, without its parallel among other creatures.

Another crab he observed retracts its legs beneath the shelter of its broad carapace, places its broad and flat forcep-claws across the head as a further protection, and remains perfectly motionless, however much annoyed. One of the crew of the vessel in which he sailed, who found a specimen of this crab on the beach, put it into his pocket as a "curious stone," and was not a little surprised, after a lapse of time, to find the apparently inanimate body making its escape.

CHAPTER III.

INTERESTING QUESTIONS—A REPLY—GROWTH OF THE
CRAYFISH—FREEDOM OF THE LOBSTER FROM ITS
SHELL—CHANGE OF THE CRAB—RENEWAL OF LIMBS
—THE WORKS OF GOD.

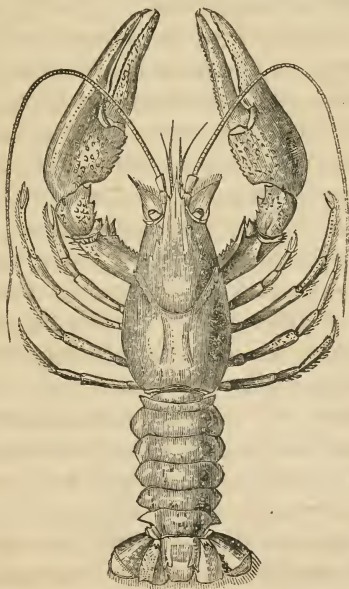
RETURNING, after this glance at kindred creatures, to the lobster, an interesting question arises: How is this animal, which resides within so solid a shell, to find room for its increase in size? "It has," as Paley remarks, "in its constitution a difficulty so great, that one could hardly conjecture beforehand how it could be disposed of." In most animals the skin grows with their growth. If instead of a soft skin there be a shell, still it admits of a gradual enlargement. If the shell, as in the tortoise, consists of several pieces, the accession of substance is made at the joinings. But the lobster's shell, being applied to the limbs of the body, as well as to the body itself, allows not of the usual mode of growth, which is observed to take place in other shells. Its hardness resists expansion, and its complexity prevents

its increasing in size by additions to its edges. How, then, was the growth of the lobster to be provided for? Was room to be made for it in the old shell, or was it to be successively fitted with new ones? If a change of shell became necessary, how was the lobster to free itself from its old one?

Observation has cleared up the difficulty. It has shown that the lobster, and similar creatures, not only change their hard coverings, but that even the covering of the eyes, the lining membrane of the stomach, the teeth, and also the expansions to which the muscles of the claws are attached, are all periodically thrown off. It is only when released from their armor that these animals increase. The soft body, liberated from its close confinement, suddenly pushes forth its growth. The vital energies are now summoned to the task of enlarging the frame, and this being completed, new coverings are acquired, to be thrown off on the arrival of the usual period.

Reaumur, who watched the process in the case of the river crayfish, describes it as attended by many efforts and much struggling.

A few days before it commences, which is early in autumn, the creature abstains from all solid food. The shield and lower segments of the body now offer less resistance than usual to the pressure of the finger. Shortly afterward, the crayfish appears rest-



Crayfish.—*Astacus fluviatilis*.

less, and rubs its legs against each other. It now throws itself on its back, agitates the whole body, and then distends it, by which the membrane joining the shield to the abdomen is burst, and that large plate is raised. Some degree of rest follows these first struggles.

After a short time the animal again puts all its organs in motion, the shield is seen to rise gradually from the legs beneath, and in less than half an hour the animal has freed itself from this portion of its armor. By drawing back its head, the horns, eyes, and legs are withdrawn as from a case; and the extrication of the last being the most difficult, it is attended with so much pain, that the effort sometimes occasions the loss of one or more of these limbs. The hinder parts are withdrawn more easily. The head is drawn below the shield, and the covering of the tail is thrown off by a forward motion. The creature may now be seen freed from all its incumbrances, and the case is left unbroken, as if no struggle had taken place within it. In a specimen found by Professor Jones, the segments of the pincer-claws, but not of the ordinary legs, were split near the joints, and

the uniting ligaments ruptured ; the lining of the stomach, and the teeth, were found in the thorax.

The change that takes place in the lobster differs from the one now described. This creature is vigorous and ravenous to the last. Instances have been known in which lobsters about to cast their covering, and enticed by the bait set for them, have entered the traps, and on the fisherman beginning to handle his prize, the animal has slipped away, leaving him only the empty shell. A circumstance of this kind enabled a naturalist to give a minute description of a very perfect case, left by a lobster in making its escape, which it did to the great annoyance of the fisherman, who had calculated on a prize somewhat beyond the ordinary dimensions. The observer in this instance could not detect any extraordinary movements or contortions when the lobster was engaged in freeing itself from its trammels, or observe that the time was prolonged, as in the case of the crayfish. It is certain, that, when delivered, the creature possesses great activity in effecting its escape.

In this case the sheaths of the horns and feelers were perfect to their minutest extremities. The stalk and transparent covering of the eyes were also uninjured. The segments of the hinder part of the body, with the plates at the end, were all joined together, but without any membrane between. The parts beneath the snout, including the jaws, pincers, and legs, together with other portions, and the internal coat of the stomach, formed one piece, with no further separation than would arise from the absence of every portion of the membrane.

The manner in which the animal escaped was not to be mistaken. Through the middle of the shield ran a line, as straight as if it had been cut with a knife. This was made evidently by a natural process of separation, for it even proceeded through the centre of the snout to the extremity of the creature, so that the least effort of the animal was sufficient to afford it a passage.

In the common crab, according to the same observer, this change takes place by a separation of the defense of the back from the lower portion of the shield, the animal lying

on its back during the process. Prior to this—and it may be so in the lobster and similar creatures—the fleshy contents of the limb-cases shrink very considerably. Otherwise the flesh, and that of the pincers in particular, could not be freed, for it does not appear that either in the crab or the lobster the shells of these parts are fissured.

The newly-extricated crab, not unlike a lump of dough inclosed in membrane, has, at first, barely strength enough to crawl to a place of safety. This is some fissure or hole, and there it absorbs as much fluid as will distend its organs and their common covering, now flexible as velvet, to the full extent of their capacity. By this means the calcareous crust is deposited, according to the newly-acquired bulk of the animal, which is proportionately the most increased in the youngest individuals.

In the earlier stages of life, the sudden pushing forward of growth occurs several times in the course of the year, but at more and more distant intervals as the animal advances toward maturity. When this period has arrived, the shell, most probably, is never

renewed. In proof of this opinion it may be stated, that a large living Norway lobster was minutely examined by an eminent naturalist, and that the carapace of this creature formed a bed on which appeared a cluster of full-grown muscles, all firmly attached, in close array. Another observer has found oysters two inches and a half in length attached to the carapace of living crabs.

There is another curious fact in the history of these creatures, which must not be omitted: it is the power of reproducing their limbs when lost by accident. The loss of a leg or two, strange to say, appears of little importance. When suddenly alarmed, indeed, a lobster will often throw off its claws with a jerk. Usually, when a limb is injured, the animal breaks it off at the joint secured to its junction with the trunk, where the growth more speedily commences.

No pain seems to attend this singular operation. The wound becomes covered with a delicate pellicle, it begins to sprout, and in due time a new claw is produced. It remains, however, unprotected with a hard shell till the next general molt, and seldom

or never acquires the consistency of the corresponding claw, although equally perfect in form. An analogy occurs in many lizards, and especially the geckos, which reproduce the tail when accidentally broken off.

Surely, then, an acquaintance with these facts will stimulate the reader to seek further information in reference to the works of the great Creator. In doing so employment will be found of a truly delightful and improving character. The further we proceed in such pursuits, the more numerous will be the displays of the divine wisdom and goodness, while often we must pause and say :—

So He ordained, whose way is in the sea,
His path amidst great waters, and his steps
Unknown ; whose judgments are a mighty deep,
Where plummet of archangel's intellect
Could never yet find soundings, but from age
To age let down, drawn up, then thrown again,
With lengthened line and added weight, still fails ;
And still the cry in heaven is, " O the depth !"

In the operations of God, it is not enough to behold him as the Creator and the Preserver ; the Redeemer should be also devoutly contemplated. " What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and

lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark viii, 36, 37. And the soul will perish, if there be not a simple and total reliance on the only Mediator, "who of God is made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," to all who believe the gospel. 1 Cor. i, 30.

The soul! exchange for aught the soul!

Born to survive yon glorious sun!

When age on age hath ceased to roll,

Its endless being but begun!

Yet man, with an immortal mind,

Pursues through life his shadows vain;

And, with mysterious folly, blind,

Barters his soul, and calls it gain!

Lord, teach us where our safety lies!

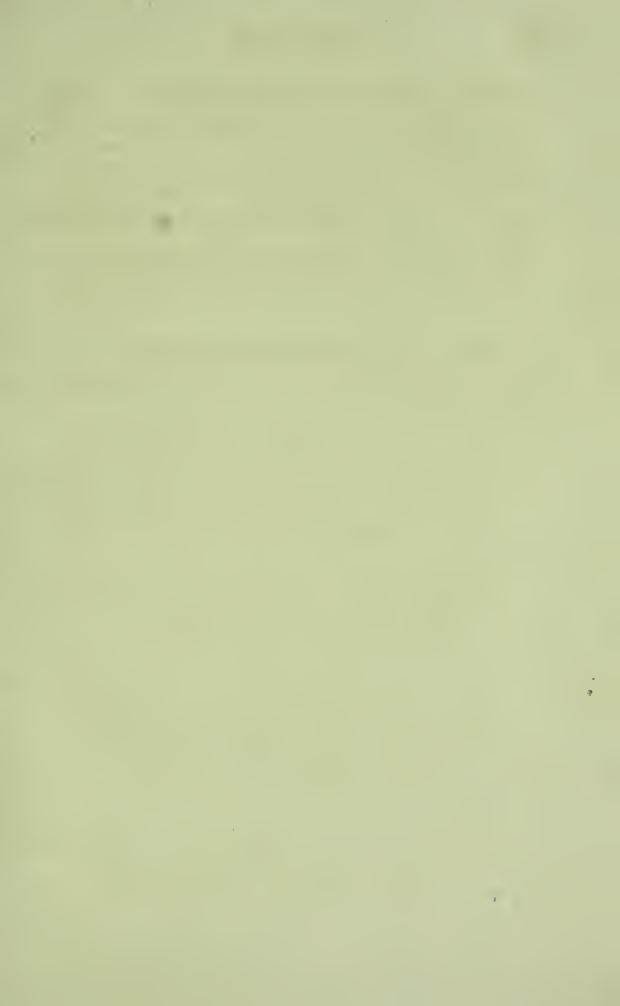
Let us the first of lessons learn:

All pilgrims here, may we be wise,

And make our souls our great concern.

THE END.





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